

CCD BULLETIN

Issues in Coastal Community Development

FROM THE FIELD: LAKE ERIE BALANCED GROWTH INITIATIVE

Pollution in Lake Erie was one of the primary drivers of public support for the Clean Water Act. With passage of the Act in 1972, most of the point source pollution that had once so severely impacted this important resource was eliminated. But today the primary threat to water quality here, as in many other areas of the country, is land-based. To work toward better addressing the impacts of land use on the Lake, Ohio Sea Grant worked with the Ohio Lake Erie Commission to help to create the “Balanced Growth Initiative”. The initiative is intended to assure long-term economic competitiveness, ecological health and quality of life in the region by focusing on land use and development planning in the major tributary watersheds.

As part of this effort, Ohio Sea Grant assisted the Ohio Lake Erie Commission and other regional partners to develop programmatic, land use and natural resource indicators to gauge the success of the initiative in protecting and restoring the Lake. These indicators measure the level of participation in the initiative, as well as impacts in terms of changes in development patterns and effects on water quality and aquatic life.



Key to the success of the Balanced Growth Initiative are the “Watershed Balanced Growth Plans”, developed by partnerships of local governments, planning agencies, nonprofit organizations and others for each watershed. The Plans designate Priority Development Areas (PDAs) and Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs). Priority Conservation Areas are important ecological, recreational, heritage, agricultural, and/or public access areas that are significant for their contribution to Lake Erie water quality and the region’s quality of life. PCAs are targeted for protection and restoration. Priority Development Areas are areas where growth and redevelopment are encouraged to maximize development potential, efficiently use existing infrastructure, promote the revitalization of cities and towns and contribute to restoring Lake Erie. Designation of a PDA does not restrict development elsewhere in a watershed, but rather identifies where additional state incentives will be made available to encourage development identified by local priorities.

While participation in the initiative is voluntary, the Lake Erie Commission is working with the State of Ohio to offer incentives through various funding agencies to communities that develop Watershed Balanced Growth Plans, or augment existing comprehensive land use plans to reflect the Watershed Balanced Growth Plan framework.

The Balanced Growth Initiative gives Lake Erie watershed communities the opportunity to foster regional collaboration and work toward focusing on the sustainability of Lake Erie, Ohio’s greatest natural resource. The planning framework and related information, including sample ordinances, are available on the Ohio Lake Erie Commission’s website at www.epa.state.oh.us/oleo/openhouse.htm.

For more information contact Joe Lucente at lucente.6@osu.edu.



COMMUNITY TOOL SHED

Better Models for Development Series

The Conservation Fund created these booklets for Maryland, the Delmarva peninsula, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and California. Each discusses the creation, maintenance and enhancement of livable communities, in the context of improving profitability and conserving the environment. Geographically relevant case studies are included.

The booklets are not available on-line. They can be purchased (\$10 to \$15 each) at:
www.conservationfund.org/?article=3021&back=true

Source Protection Handbook: Using Land Conservation to Protect Drinking Water Supplies

www.tpl.org/content_documents/source_protect_hbook.pdf

From the Trust for Public Land and the American Water Works Association (with support from the Environmental Protection Agency), this new publication provides a comprehensive look at watershed protection to ensure drinking water quality and supply. It includes a “how-to” on watershed assessment, prioritization of lands for protection, and techniques for conserving land, as well as background information on “making the case” for the valuable role of natural areas in source protection.

Growth & Water Resources

www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/pdf/growthwater.pdf

This fact sheet from the Environmental Protection Agency gives a quick overview of benefits that thoughtful development planning can have for water quality, and outlines guidelines for minimizing the impacts of development on water resources.



RECOMMENDED READING

Protecting Water Resources with Smart Growth

This guide from the Environmental Protection Agency describes 75 smart growth measures specifically aimed at communities interested in protecting water resources. Policy suggestions include regional approaches, such as reducing impervious surfaces in sensitive watersheds by promoting infill development, and site-level techniques for reducing the impacts of development. The document can be downloaded at:
www.epa.gov/smartgrowth/pdf/waterresources_with_sg.pdf.

Community-Based Watershed Management: Lessons from the National Estuary Program

This document details case studies from the 28 National Estuary Programs (NEPs). The NEPs are partnerships between the Environmental Protection Agency and other federal, state and local organizations, which are charged with protecting and restoring key estuaries throughout the country. NEP activities, based on comprehensive conservation and management plans for each estuary watershed, range from outreach to educate the general public to land acquisition and implementing best management practices and habitat restoration projects. Each chapter is based on key management principles which have broad applicability for watershed management beyond the National Estuary Program. The publication can be downloaded at
www.epa.gov/owow/estuaries/nepprimer/documents/NEPPrimer.pdf.

The CCD Bulletin is edited and distributed by the National Sea Grant Office. But for the most meaningful content, we're relying on you. We're especially interested in sharing your stories of successful (or less than successful) coastal community development projects. Please send your suggestions, submissions and insights to: Amy.Zimmerling@noaa.gov.